

# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

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## **THESIS**

**WAR AND PEACEKEEPING MISSION OF THE NORDIC -  
POLISH BRIGADE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

by

Artur O. Bilski

March 2001

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Donald Abenheim  
Tjarck G. Roessler

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**WAR AND PEACEKEEPING MISSION OF THE NORDIC-POLISH BRIGADE  
IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

Artur O. Bilski  
Lieutenant, Polish Navy  
B.S., Naval Academy, 1990

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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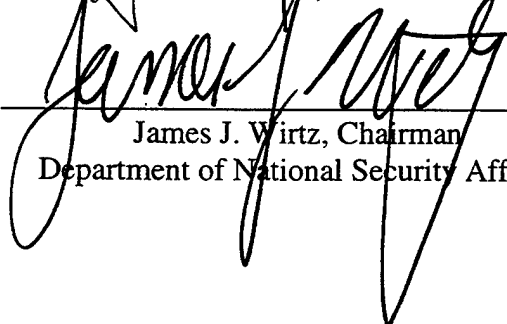
Author:

  
Artur O. Bilski

Approved by:

  
Donald Abenheim, Thesis Advisor

  
Tjarck G. Roessler, Second Reader

  
James J. Wirtz, Chairman  
Department of National Security Affairs

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since the end of the Cold War an increasing number of multinational peacekeeping operations have taken place in Europe, Africa and Asia. This new phase of multinational cooperation represents a step forward. This study focuses on the military and civilian aspects of the peacekeeping activity of the Nordic-Polish Brigade IFOR/SFOR (Implementation Forces/Stabilization Forces) in Bosnia. The deployment of the Nordic-Polish Brigade, composed of eight nations, including the five core nations of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian detachments, was intended to create a secure environment necessary for the work of humanitarian agencies. It also was to accomplish the non-military aspects of the agreement, within its capabilities and the limits imposed by military tasks. The civil-military activities in support of peace operations were new for NATO and for most, if not all, non-NATO countries as well. The Nordic- Polish Brigade is an example of successful multinational cooperation between countries with different military and cultural backgrounds.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since the end of the Cold War an increasing number of multinational peacekeeping operations have taken place in Europe, Africa and Asia. This new phase of multinational cooperation represents a step forward. This study focuses on the military and civilian aspects of the peacekeeping activity of the Nordic-Polish Brigade IFOR/SFOR (Implementation Forces/Stabilization Forces) in Bosnia. The deployment of the Nordic-Polish Brigade, composed of eight nations, including the five core nations of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian detachments, was intended to create a secure environment necessary for the work of humanitarian agencies. It also was to accomplish the non-military aspects of the agreement, within its capabilities and the limits imposed by military tasks. The civil-military activities in support of peace operations were new for NATO and for most, if not all, non-NATO countries as well. The threat in Bosnia to the peacekeepers was real. This thesis analyses different challenges which the peacekeeping forces of the Nordic-Polish Brigade faced in Bosnia. This example of multinational cooperation is now followed by other military enterprises as the South Eastern European Brigade located in Bulgaria. The Nordic- Polish Brigade is an example of successful multinational cooperation between countries with different military and cultural backgrounds.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

According to Ingrid Rasmussen “peace operations is a new and comprehensive term that covers a wide range of activities. Peace operations create and sustain the conditions necessary for peace to flourish. They comprise three types of activities: support to diplomacy (peacemaking, peacebuilding, and preventive diplomacy), peacemaking, and peace enforcement. The related activities include traditional peacekeeping as well peace enforcement, i.e., humanitarian assistance, establishment of order and stability, enforcement of sanctions, guarantee and denial of movement, establishment of protection zones, and forcible separation of belligerents.”<sup>1</sup>

To carry out peacekeeping operations peacekeepers have to understand the “environment” in which they act. This is especially true because “civil-military relations in peacekeeping, peace-enforcing or peace-building operations are fundamentally different from those that pertain in “normal” conditions of peace or war. In contemporary peacekeeping, the military have taken on new and significant political roles.”<sup>2</sup> To fulfill these tasks the peacekeepers have to understand the historical and political context of the area, in which the mission is conducted.

Michael C. Williams states in his book that “peace operations cover the broad spectrum of actions intended to forestall, diminish, or end outbreaks of violence on the international scene. They encompass different types of civilian, civil- military or just

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<sup>1</sup> Ingrid Rasmussen, “*Multinationality in Crisis Response Operation*”, <http://www.na.be/publications/comrep/200/at-103-e.html>

<sup>2</sup> Michael C. Williams, “*Civil – Military Relations and Peacekeeping*”, p. 15.

plain military programs designed essentially to give peace a chance in varying circumstances of violence across the broad front of conflict resolution.”<sup>3</sup> These factors have to be taken into account in planning multinational peacekeeping operations such as those in Bosnia or Kosovo.

The deployment of the Nordic-Polish Brigade in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1996-2000, comprising 8 nations including the five core nations of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the Estonian, Latvian and Estonian detachment, was intended to create a secure environment necessary for the work of humanitarian agencies and the accomplishment of the non-military aspects of the Dayton Agreement. This thesis analyses the background of the Balkan conflict and military and civil-military relations in a multinational environment the peacekeeping forces of the Nordic-Polish Brigade faced in Bosnia.

#### **A. HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BALKAN CONFLICT**

The citizens of the Balkan nations did not really get a chance to learn their history from impartial, independent, credible and honest sources. “Their tragic defect is an obsession with their own history; their hearts are in the past, not future. In the Balkans, intellectuals tend to be the standard-bearers of nationalism; in Serbia, this is carried to fetishistic lengths.”<sup>4</sup>

People change their thinking about the world in which they live as a function of the information they receive. The truth in the Balkans is always questionable unless it is directed against the enemy. The world of the Balkans is a world of superstition, and folk

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<sup>3</sup> Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, Pamela Aall, “*Managing Global Chaos*”, p. 321.

beliefs, which feeds fear, phobias and myths. Thus, there is not really much room for the truth but there was a lot of room for fear, which was the driving force behind the hatred. "The hatred that astounded the world (in Bosnia) was engineered, not innate."<sup>5</sup>

Living for hundreds of years under Turkish rule dealt a rather harsh blow to the national psychology of the Balkan nations. "The Balkan countries emerged from centuries of Ottoman rule with little more than a desperately wished-for national identity. Even their religious sensibilities had been nationalized, by the actions of both their own intellectuals and the Ottoman regime."<sup>6</sup>

History was always a tool in the hands of the Balkan politicians to form a collective conscience of the nation based on nationalism, which was almost perceived as a religion. In 1889 Cedomil Mijatovic, Serbia's foreign minister told the Royal Academy: "An inexhaustible source of national pride was discovered in Kosovo. More important than language and stronger than the Church, this pride unites all Serbs in a single nation" and one more significant statement from the same author: We bless Kosovo because the memory of Kosovo heroes upheld us, encouraged us, taught us, and guided us".<sup>7</sup>

Whole generations of Serbs and other Balkan nations were raised under the influence of a strong national mythology, repeated not only by the power-hungry politicians, but also by the clergy. This kind of education, supported by intellectual elites, caused serious damage to the perception of reality.

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<sup>4</sup> Warren Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador", p. 3, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Jasminka Udovicki and James Ridgeway "Yugoslav 's Ethnic Nightmare", p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> William W.Hagen, "The Balkans' Lethal Nationalisms", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1999, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Judah, "The Serbs, History, Myth & Destruction of Yugoslavia", p. 68.



“Nationalist “intellectuals”, wrapped in the mantle of august academies of sciences, expounded their pseudo-history of the victimization of Serbs (Or Croats) through the ages. One of them seriously asserted to that Serbs had committed no crimes or moral transgressions at any point in their long history.”<sup>8</sup> That is why the conscience of Balkan politicians is always clean no matter what they have done.

So far, the Orthodox Church did not condemn strongly enough Milosevic’s policy and the wars he started, which would be justified from the theological point of view. The Orthodox Church neither called for stopping the war nor called for the reconciliation of the Balkan nations. On the contrary, the Church was acting in favor of the former communist party members and strengthened their position by underlying ethnic differences. In 1989 during the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, Milosevic was accompanied by black-robed metropolitans of the Orthodox Church.

Bishop Jovan of Sabac-Valjevo, however, made the most astonishing remark, in the 1980s. He said : ” Since Prince Lazar and (the Battle of) Kosovo the Serbs, above all, have been creating Heavenly Serbia, which today must certainly have grown, to become the largest state in heaven. If we only think of those innocent victims of the last wars, millions and millions of Serbian men, women and children killed or tortured in the most terrible way or thrown into pits by Ustasha criminals, than we can understand that today’s Serbian empire is in the heavens.”<sup>9</sup>

If such words are spoken by one of the leaders of the Church, nobody can expect the common people to follow the rules. Religion should speak out loudly for such things

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<sup>8</sup> Warren Zimmermann, “*The Last Ambassador*”, *Foreign Affairs* , March/April 1995, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Tim Judah, “*The Serbs*”, *History, Myth & Destruction of Yugoslavia*”, p. 47.

as reconciliation, forgiveness, tolerance, respect for other nations and cultures. Worst of all, the media, under the thumb of most republican regimes, spewed an endless daily torrent of violence and enmity.<sup>10</sup>

## **B. NATIONALISM AS A RELIGION**

Nationalism is then a form of secular religion in Serbia which is much more appreciated than Christianity. Many of Orthodox Church clergy acted hand in hand with the former communists and during the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, many of local clergy voluntarily helped to clean the area of Croats and Muslims. One of them was the Serb priest Savo Knezevic from Doboj. He was one of the key persons behind the ethnic cleansing in the Doboj area. All who were against him paid the price with their lives. In 1992 he showed up at the Serb opposition party meeting in Doboj, took a machine gun out of his jacket and killed every attendees there and poured gasoline down on the bodies and burned them afterwards.<sup>11</sup> That was nothing new. In 1942 Chetniks under the command of the priest Momcilo Djujic killed up to 200 people from the village and surroundings of Gata near Split.<sup>12</sup> I can only imagine how strong hatred was since even priests could not resist it.

Nationalistic religion was easy to spread and easy to understand with a clearly defined enemy. "A lugubrious, paranoid, and Serbocentric view of the past enables the Serbs to blame everyone but themselves for whatever goes wrong."<sup>13</sup> Individual responsibility and consciousness were replaced by the state's.

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<sup>10</sup> Warren Zimmerman, "The Last Ambassador", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1995, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, December 1996, Vol. 8, No 17(D).

<sup>12</sup> Tim Judah, "The Serbs, History, Myth & Destruction of Yugoslavia", p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> Warren Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1995, p. 3.

Nationalism gave to the people the feeling of freedom from individual responsibility. In such a situation, a politician is always justified regardless of what he has done because he has done it on behalf of the nation. It also applies to the people who follow him. Therefore, the only driving force which will judge him is history, which is created by the next generation of Balkan monsters or politicians, ready to the same or to create new myths and to manipulate the facts in order to stay in power. History repeats itself.

The breakup of Yugoslavia is a classic example of nationalism from the top down or a manipulated nationalism in a region where peace has historically prevailed more than war and in which a quarter of the population consisted of mixed marriages. The manipulators condoned and even provoked local ethnic violence in order to engender animosities that could then be magnified by the press, leading to further violence.<sup>14</sup>

The Balkan politicians led the nations to the point of atavistic feelings of manipulated ethnic hatred. "Hatred which sets man against man, and cast both alike into misery and misfortune, or drives both opponents to the grave."<sup>15</sup> Every single Balkan man faces a choice either to be a martyr or nationalist following the government line.

The Balkan people were raised in the same climate of conspiracy theory. This theory gives simple answers to explain the world. It plays on emotions and does not require anyone to think. You have to act. You have to direct your anger against your enemy. Everybody knows who the good and bad are and the politicians repeated the same

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Ivo Andric, "*Bridge On The Drina River*".

nationalistic mantra through the ages: we are the only missionary men able to save and protect the nation and give it a bright future.

Each of the nations living in Balkans has its own national myths, which were used for consolidating their national identities. Throughout the rule of the Ottoman Empire, the Serbs and Croats treated the islamicized Bosnian population with deep distrust. They consider them as Serbs and Croats forcefully converted to Islam and disdainfully called them "Turks" and hoped that they would return to the religion and nationality of their ancestors. This was another myth which caused tremendous the Muslim population to suffer tremendously. The Both Serbs and Croats believed that "after a mighty storm, a change of fortunes, a long campaign of terror, those lapsed Slavs would return to the faith, casting aside the religion of the Turks for their ancestral faith."<sup>16</sup>

"Bosnian Muslims had nothing in common with real Turks. But they were politically Turks – loyal to the Turkish Ottoman Empire and the Sultan."<sup>17</sup> That was the way they were perceived. "Muslims change their cap as the wind changes."<sup>18</sup> This was the wide spread opinions of Bosnian Muslims among the Serbs ad Croats. However, the process of islamicization took many generations and nearly 150 years starting from the conquest of Bosnia in 1463.

According to Fouad Ajami "that what helped to carry out this process was the fairly weak structure of the Bosnian Church. In some areas, such as Herzegovina and the

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<sup>16</sup> Fouad Ajami, "In Europe's Shadows", *The New Republic*, November 21 1994, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Aleks Djilas, "The Nation That Wasn't", *The New Republic*, September 25, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Fouad Ajami, "In Europe's Shadows", *The New Republic*, November 21 1994, p. 30.

Serbian fringe of eastern Bosnia, there had been churches acting in competition.”<sup>19</sup> The truth is also that converted Muslims had more privileges than Christian believers, which created tensions and hatred based on feelings of either Catholic or Orthodox betrayal by Christians. Finally, however, in 1974 the Muslim population in Bosnia was recognized by Tito’s constitution as one of the six “constituent nations” of Yugoslavia.<sup>20</sup>

The Serbs love the legend of themselves standing at the ramparts defending Christendom. However, the truth is much more complicated. “After Kosovo, Serbs fought Hungarians, and they fought on behalf of the Turks as their vassals and allies in intermittent campaigns that stretched nearly two centuries.”<sup>21</sup>

This myth of Serbs as the defenders of Christianity against Islam is often repeated nowadays. The Serb from Rieff’s book<sup>22</sup> says, “ Serbs only have history. For five hundred years we Serbs have been defending Western civilization against the Turks. Vuk Karadzic did it in the nineteenth century, our leader, Radovan Karadzic, does it now. We all do!” This kind of thinking goes back into Serb history and it is deep-seated in people’s minds and it relates to poorly educated peasants and workers and intellectual elites as well.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism spread all over Europe by the French Revolution of 1789, began to penetrate the Balkan nations. The European powers, especially Russia

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>20</sup> David Rieff, “Slaughterhouse”, *Bosnia and the failure of the West*, p. 68.

<sup>21</sup> Fouad Ajami, “In Europe’s Shadows”, *The New Republic*, November 21, p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> David Rieff, “Slaughterhouse”, *Bosnia and the failure of the West*, p. 86.

were very eager for regaining political influence in this area since the Ottoman Empire was getting weaker. Russia became the patron of this process in Serbia.<sup>23</sup>

In 1918 Yugoslavia was created from the kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro and the South Slav parts of Austria-Hungary. "It was obvious those days that Bosnian Muslims were something more than just a regional appellation, and more than just a religious group. But the Serbs tended to regard the new kingdom as an extension of Serbia and organized it in a centralist manner. Non Serbs, including Bosnian Muslims were rightly dissatisfied."<sup>24</sup>

The Second World War brought ustasha crimes, committed on behalf of the Croatian fascist state of Ante Pavelica, which cooperated very closely with Germany and Italy. The Ustasha ideologists knew what to make of Bosnian's Muslims. They considered them to be Croats of the Islamic faith. As Ante Pavelic put it, the "Croat national consciousness never was extinguished in the Muslim element of Bosnia, and after the departure of the Turks, has resurfaced. The autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina was denied, its boundaries redrawn to subordinate it to the Croat project. Croatian chauvinism grew genocidal."<sup>25</sup> "Total number of wartime deaths in Yugoslavia was about one million, and those about half of them were Serbs."<sup>26</sup>

After World War II, the official Yugoslav Communist Party policy was based on the ideology of the "brotherhood and unity" concept. There was no teaching of real

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<sup>23</sup> William W. Hagen, "The Balkan's Lethal Nationalism", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1999, p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> David Rieff, "Almost Justice", *The New Republic*, July 6, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> Tim Judah, "The Serbs, History, Myth & Destruction of Yugoslavia", p. 133.

history in the schools. They did so because during communism, the Yugoslav communist party never really touched on the history of the Second World War. Authorities kept all atrocities that happened hidden.

Officially everybody was equally guilty for what happened during the war. The communists, however first took revenge on Serb and Croatian nationalists. "Altogether it has been estimated that up to 200,000 people were killed by Tito's mass shooting, forced death marches and concentration camps in the period 1945-6."<sup>27</sup>

Even communism, though, could not hide its nationalistic face. The new Yugoslavia was composed of six republics and two autonomous regions. The republics were Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Slovenia. Serbia contained the two autonomous regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Again, although officially, there was a policy of "brotherhood and unity" in Yugoslavia. However, that was once again the myth. "The country was governed from Belgrade; Serbs dominated the Party and the armed forces; and for those who had lived through the war there was strong sense that Serbs's record was morally superior to Croatia's."<sup>28</sup>

However, the greatest source of instability in Yugoslavia was Kosovo. The problem came out strongly after the fall in 1966 of Tito's security chief, Aleksandar Rankovic, who ruled Kosovo with the iron hand. After clashes with Albanians in 1968, many Serbs left Kosovo for Serbia proper. "Because the Kosovo were predominantly Muslim, anti - Islamic sentiment became an ever more important feature of Serb nationalism; it had long been part of the baggage of Serbian literary culture, but was now

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<sup>27</sup> Noel Malcolm, *"Bosnia, a Short History"*, p. 193.

<sup>28</sup> Noel Malcolm, *"Bosnia , a Short History"*, p. 204.

expressed in much stronger forms, as in fiercely anti-Muslim novel "Knife", published by the radical nationalist Vuk Draskovic in the early 1980s."<sup>29</sup> Also the Orthodox Church tried to seized the chance to "revive the sense of religious identity in the literary and political culture of the country"<sup>30</sup> using Kosovo.

Intellectuals appealed to nationalism as a driving force of nation unity. Additionally the Serb nationalists received support from the *crème de la crème* of Serb academic society. The Serbian Academy of Science published in 1986 the so called "Memorandum" in which grievances about Kosovo were combined with the accusation that Tito's policies had aimed at the weakening of Serbia by giving too much power to the republic and autonomous regions. In order to make decisions, the Serbs had to seek an agreement with the rest of the republics and autonomous regions.

In 1987 a new strong leader rose to power: Slobodan Milosevic. His first step was to exploit the current situation in Kosovo to increase nationalism. This was eagerly supported by the media, and especially the state controlled television. In the late 1980s, at the height of Serbia's nationalist euphoria, hundreds of thousands could be relied upon to demonstrate for "Serbian Unity" and "All Serbs in One State." "Mr. Milosevic propaganda machinery used also images from the real Croatian genocide against the Serbs during World War II to portray every contemporary Croat as a latter-day Fascist ready to throw Serbs into concentration camps. Mr. Milosevic has had a consistent purpose: to use the darkest Balkan ghosts to inspire the fear (and fear's other face, crazed

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 206.



violence) on which he has thrived.”<sup>31</sup> He later on used his power more after the nationalist political party’s victories in the elections in November 1990.

### C. BREAKUP OF YUGOSLAVIA

Western countries were aware of what was going on in Yugoslavia from intelligence reports. “Intelligence suggesting that secession of the Yugoslavia republics was unavoidable. A CIA report written in November 1990 predicted Yugoslavia’s disintegration within eighteen months, though the State Department strongly disagreed with this prognosis because they thought the U.S. would work it out through political pressure and negotiations. Warren Zimmerman, the last U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1989 to 1992, explains the American attitude toward that country.

The problem of Yugoslavia was surpassed by both Poland and Hungary in economical and political openness. In addition, human rights had become a major element of U.S. policy, and Yugoslavia’s record on these issues was not too good. Finally, I was to reassert the traditional mantra of U.S. support for Yugoslavia’s unity, independence, and territorial integrity. But I would add that the United States could only support unity in the context of democracy; it would strongly oppose unity imposed or preserved by force.<sup>32</sup>

The other factor was “the pressure from public opinion offended by Serbia’s manipulation of Yugoslavia for its own purposes. The U.S. Congress had already passed legislation in 1990 terminating aid to Yugoslavia unless the president confirmed that human rights were being respected.”<sup>33</sup> But Milosevic had his own plans concerning the Yugoslav Federation.

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<sup>31</sup> Roger Cohen, Yes, “*Blood Stains the Balkans. No, It’s Not Just Fate*”, *New York Time*, October 15, 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Warren Zimmermann, “*A Memoir of the Collapse of Yugoslavia*”, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> James Bjork & Allan E. Goodman, “*Yugoslavia, 1991-92: Could Diplomacy Have Prevented a*

Slovenia was allowed to leave Yugoslavia in 1991 after being attacked by very weak federal forces composed of mostly poorly trained draftees, and altogether 3,000 soldiers and a couple dozen armored vehicles. The Slovenian army at that time was hardly more than militia, badly equipped and not well trained, but based on national support, it succeeded in driving back the attackers in a week.

The other story is that Slobodan Milosevic did not want to fight any longer. This is why "only" 40 Yugoslav federal army soldiers were killed in Slovenia during the street fights. There were almost no Serbs in Slovenia and supply lines for the Yugoslav Federal army were too extended to carry out the military operations. Subsequently, Yugoslavia was forced to accept Slovenia's secession.

Croatian situation was more complicated. There was a huge 600,000 Serb minority and Milosevic was not willing to give up as quickly as in Slovenia. The Serb minority, which was very large there was strongly against the secession. These Croatian Serbs declared their independence for Croatia, announcing the "Autonomous Serbian Republic of Krajina." The war in Croatia broke out. Heavy fighting raged along Croatia's borders from July into the fall of 1991. The heavy fights occurred especially in the eastern regions of Croatia, where the city Vukovar was subjected to a full-scale bombardment and assault by the Yugoslav federal army. By the beginning of October 1991, approximately 1,000 people had been killed in fights in Croatia, and 200,000 people had been driven out from their homes. In February 1992, the United Nations

deployed troops into Bosnia to carry the stabilization plan in Croatia. Unfortunately, they had a very limited mandate.

In the early days of the war in Croatia, Bosnia seemed to be far away from the fanatical allegiances displayed in neighboring Serbia and Croatia. "Bosnia's multiethnic coalition remained intact, and outbreaks of violence were minimal. But as the permanence of Croatia and Slovenia's secession became ever more obvious, politicians in Bosnia - Hercegovina had to grapple with how they would respond to the demise of the old Yugoslav federation. By the end of 1991 "the government of the republic faced three broad choices, each of which would deeply divide its national communities:

- It could remain in a truncated Yugoslavia with Serbia, Montenegro, and perhaps Macedonia. Milosevic proposed such a scheme as early as August 1991, but the idea remained anathema to Bosnia's Muslims and Croats, who would then be minorities in the de facto Serb national state and even more vulnerable to Serbian domination than they had been under the original federation.
- Bosnia-Hrcegovina could also be partitioned by Serbia and Croatia. This plan was discussed by presidents Tudjman and Milosevic in March 1991, but it was fiercely opposed by Muslims and the cosmopolitan-minded "Yugoslav".
- Finally, Bosnia-Hercegovina could pursue independence, as Slovenia and Croatia had done. This course appealed to Muslims and to the Croat community, which had a longstanding tactical alliance with the Muslims, but terrified the Serbs."<sup>34</sup>

When changes in Central Eastern Europe started peacefully and the Soviet Union fell apart most of the people and politicians came to the conclusions that Europe would not face any conflict in the foreseeable future. However, it quickly turned out that they were wrong and old European demons of nationalism in the Balkans were rising. The most dangerous threat toward Western countries – the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union

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<sup>34</sup>James Bjork, Allan E. Goodman, *"Yugoslav, 1991-92: Could Diplomacy Have Prevented a Tragedy?"*

ceased to exist. Communist ideology, on which all the regimes in the CEE were based, died. Nobody believed in it, not even the communists themselves. However, the communists in Poland and Hungary on the contrary, as opposed to communists in the Balkans, were aware that they could not stay in power any longer and they had to give up it and verified it themselves through the democratic process.

During communism, Yugoslav authorities or the communist party, did not need legitimacy because they had the military, police and secret services in their hands so they could control the society. When communism fell apart, the communist apparatus needed legitimacy to exercise power. There was a need for new ideology to influence people's minds. They used nationalism to put the people into xenophobic hysteria. That was the beginning of the Balkan wars, atrocities, ethnic cleansing in the 1990s. It was also a shock for many people in Europe, especially for those dealing with politics, because they did not know how to react and what to do to stop the mass killings. "The hatred that astounded the world (in Bosnia) was engineered, not innate."<sup>35</sup>

The ideology was their certain form of religion like it was during the French Revolution when patriotism was supposed to replace Catholicism. However, in Serbia, the Orthodox Church acted hand in hand with the former communists and therefore, strengthened its legitimacy. Ideology to be widely accepted, must be understandable with a clearly defined enemy. Individual responsibility must be replaced by the state's and a better life must be promised. This is what Milosevic's nationalism gave to the Serb people.

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<sup>35</sup> Jasminka Udovicki, James Ridgeway "Yugoslav 's Ethnic Nightmare" p. 34.

Bosnia's experience had changed the view of European politics since Europe itself was not able to do anything to stop that small war. Most of the people realized how passive and powerless was Europe and was not even able to cross their borders of selfishness and interests.

## II. INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY TOWARD PEACE

### A. US AND UE EFFORT TO STOP THE CONFLICT

The United States, Russia and the EU were the main actors on the political scene wanted to influence the situation in the Balkans and to stop the war. According to Richard Holbrooke "it was president George Bush who, during 1990 and 1991, largely ignored the ample signs of Yugoslavia's collapse; it was president George Bush who after the Serbs attacked the Slovenes during July 1991, and despite changes enacted only seven months before that had explicitly made such "crisis management" part of the alliance's mission, chose to "hand off" the conflict to the Europeans-and to the military toothless European Union, not NATO."<sup>36</sup>

The Bush administration did not have a plan on how to solve the emerging problems. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft said that the president would frequently ask him, "Tell me again what this is all about. He saw no US interests engaged in Bosnia, and his European allies reinforced his skepticism."<sup>37</sup>

Secretary of State James A. Baker III believed he "was talking to a wall with a crew cut after meeting with Milosevic in Belgrade in June 1991 to warn him against "exploitation of ethnic resentments and failure to respect human rights in Kosovo" – complaints that could be lifted from today's."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Mark Danner, "Slouching Toward Dayton", *The New York Review*, April 23, 1998, p. 60.

<sup>37</sup> Warren Bass "The Triage of Dayton", *Foreign Affair*, Volume 77, No. 5, p. 98.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

The European Community did not have unanimity.” This is the hour of Europe!” – cried the egregious Jacques Poos, foreign minister of Luxembourg, when Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic’s army first opened fire in Slovenia and Croatia in the summer of 1991. “ We do not interfere in American affairs; we trust that America will not interfere in European affairs,” said Jacques Delors, voicing the only consistent and distinctive theme of “European” foreign policy: graceless anti-Americanism.<sup>39</sup>

When the war started in Croatia the EC continued to try to broker a lasting cease - fire and peacekeeping arrangement in Croatia. However, the fights were much more fierce. Cease- fires negotiated under the EC mediation lasted only weeks, days, or even hours before one or the other side broke them. The EC wanted Yugoslav republics to stay together in one state but it turned out to be impossible.

The EC policy toward Yugoslavia was unfortunate and based on wrong premises and when those failed, the EC did not have the military power to efficiently stop the war in Yugoslavia. The immaturity of the foreign policy of the EC, which tried to represent all of Western Europe was visible with the naked eye.

The EC’s decision to recognize the seceding Yugoslav republics brought to a close that organization’s role as preeminent mediator in the Yugoslav conflict, though the Community, and Lord Carrington in particular, would continue to play a role in negotiations. The institution that began to share the mediating role and succeeded to the peacekeeping role in Yugoslavia was the United Nations.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Noel Malcolm, “*The Case Against “Europe”*”, *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 74 No. 2, p. 68.

<sup>40</sup> James Bjork , Allan E. Goodman , “*Yugoslavia, 1991-92: Could Diplomacy Have Prevented a Tragedy?*”, p. 19.

## **B. DEPLOYMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

In February 1992, the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) deployed troops into Bosnia to carry out the stabilization plan in Croatia. In March 1992, voters in Bosnia overwhelmingly approved independence. By the end of spring 1992, Bosnian Serbs, who had significant arsenal at their disposal, begun forcible resistance to Bosnia's independence and controlled more than 60 per cent of Bosnia's territory.

In April 1992, the EU recognized Bosnia as an independent state. All three former republics, which seceded from the Yugoslav Federation and declared their independence, were admitted to the UN. At the same time Serbs were continuing their aggression. The UN Security Council imposed economic sanctions against Serbia at the end of May. A second UN contingent was deployed in June 1992 to monitor the numerous cease-fires that were periodically declared in Bosnia.

Since the war in Bosnia started, systematical ethnic cleansing begun. It was a planned operation of mass killings in order to terrify the rest of the population and disseminated this information in order to force the other minorities to leave before Serb forces came to the area. There were 4,377 million inhabitants in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1991 before the war started. Now there are about 3 million people. Over 200,00 people had been killed<sup>41</sup> and 54 per cent left their houses: 1.4 million were expelled and 1.3 million escaped from the area. The greatest victims of ethnic expulsion were the Muslims who had as many as 1 million refugees.

The UN study reports suggest a common method of initial apprehension and identification of those non-Serbs detained for ultimate disposition, either, long-term



detention, deportation, or execution. A common plan is also suggested by the implementation of a system whereby prisoners were detained, classified, and subjected to similar types of abuse (e.g., it was often reported that intellectuals, politicians, police, and the wealthy were regularly tortured and killed in certain camps).<sup>42</sup>

In February 1994, in response to a Bosnian Serb mortar attack killing 68 civilians in a Sarajevo marketplace, NATO issued an ultimatum that if Bosnian Serb heavy weapons were not withdrawn from UN monitored exclusion zones around the capital, Bosnian Serb forces would be subject to air strikes. Three months later, NATO employed its first air strikes against Bosnian Serb forces to stop a Serb attack on the eastern enclave of a UN safe area of Gorazde.

In the early autumn of 1995, the Serbs had suffered military setbacks. They used to have superiority in heavy weapons but in those days their infantry and equipment were overstretched. There also was a different attitude in the UN and NATO caused by reported atrocities against the Muslims, ruined economies, and weariness among the civilian population.

The Srebrenica massacre in July 1995 finally forced the international community to act firmly. It was the worst war crime in Europe, since those of the Nazis-made UNPROFOR's ignominy complete. The myth of a greater Serbia led to the Srebrenica case where "within thirty hours, little more than a single day, Mladic's men had expelled

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<sup>41</sup> *"The Black Book"*, by the writers and editors of *"The New Republic"*, p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992) S/1994/674/Annexes pp. 48-49.*

to Muslim territory 23,000 women and children; within five days they had murdered more than 7,000 men.”<sup>43</sup>

The United Nations mandate was very limited and inside there were different opinions within the UN when it came to the use of force. The Secretary General’s report admits to” pervasive ambivalence within the United Nations regarding the role of force in the pursuit of peace” and to “ an institutional ideology of impartiality even when confronted with attempted genocide.” It also confesses that “ we were, with hindsight, wrong to declare repeatedly and publicly that we did not want to use air power against the Serbs except as a last resort, and to accept the shelling of the safe areas as a daily occurrence.”<sup>44</sup>

That was the most significant failure in UN history. The United Nations experience in Bosnia was one of the most difficult in history, which was stated in an official UN statement.“ The fall of Srebrenica also is shocking because the enclave’s inhabitants believed that the authority of the United Nations Security Council, the presence of UNPROFOR peacekeepers, and the might of NATO air power would ensure their safety.

Instead, the Serb forces ignored the Security Council, pushed aside the UNPROFOR troops, and assessed correctly that air power would not be used to stop them. They overran the safe area of Srebrenica with ease, and then proceeded to depopulate the territory within 48 hours. Their leaders then engaged in high-level

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<sup>43</sup> Mark Danner, “*The Killing Fields of Bosnia*”, *The New York Review*, September 24, 1998, p. 67.

<sup>44</sup> “*The Whole and Awful Truth*”, *The New Republic*, December 13, 1999.

negotiations with representatives of the international community while their forces on the ground executed and buried thousands of men and boys within a matter of days.”<sup>45</sup>

United States diplomacy was seeking a solution to the conflict. All these efforts led to a peace agreement, signed by representatives of all sides involved in the Bosnian war in November 1995 in Dayton, Ohio.

On November 16, 1995, Lieutenant General Wesley Clark was in Dayton, Ohio. Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic and other US officials were watching on a PowerScene virtual reality imagining system three-dimensional scenes of the hills of Bosnia east of Sarajevo. They tried to draw a computer path leading from the besieged Bosnian capital to Gorazde, a UN “safe area” surrounded by Bosnian Serbs.

The Bosnian war was approaching its end while the final outcome of the peace talks had not yet been achieved. Winning an accord in Bosnia was not easy. Dayton took considerable diplomatic skills and tenacity. However, according to many, the Balkan conflict might have been avoided if the international diplomacy was more firm and decided.

The agreement was officially confirmed in Paris on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1995. On the 20<sup>th</sup> the authority was formally transferred from the United Nation Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) to the Implementation Forces of NATO (IFOR).

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<sup>45</sup> “*The Whole and Awful Truth*”, *The New Republic*, December 13, 1999.

### C. DAYTON AGREEMENT

According to NATO documents "the political basis for the Alliance's role in the former Yugoslavia was established at the North Atlantic Council meeting in a Ministerial session in Oslo, in June 1992. At that time NATO Foreign Ministers announced their readiness to support, on a case by case basis, in accordance with their own procedures, peacekeeping activities under the responsibility of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) (subsequently renamed the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe(OSCE)). This included making available Alliance resources and expertise for peacekeeping operations."<sup>46</sup>

NATO countries were putting serious political pressure on Yugoslavia, which go together with military preparations. "Between 1992 and 1995, the Alliance took several key decisions, which led to operations both by NATO naval forces, in conjunction with Western European Union, to monitor and subsequently enforce the UN embargo and sanctions in the Adriatic; and by NATO air force, first to monitor and than to enforce, the UN no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. Decisive action by the Alliance in support of the UN in the former Yugoslavia, together with a determined diplomatic effort, broke the siege of Sarajevo, led to a genuine cease-fire and made a negotiated solution to conflict possible in autumn 1995."<sup>47</sup>

When the negotiations at Dayton culminated in the peace agreement, the way was open for the first out-of-area deployment of NATO troops since the Organization's founding in April 1949. Under the peace agreement, the North Atlantic Council (NAC)

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<sup>46</sup> "NATO's Role in Bringing Peace to the Former Yugoslavia", <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/bpfy.htm>.

authorized the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1995, to deploy enabling forces into Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On the same day, SACEUR tasked the Commander in chief of Southern Europe to assume control over assigned NATO land, air and maritime forces as Commander IFOR. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December the NATO Foreign Defense Ministers agreed to the military plan for the Implementation Force (IFOR). On the same day, the acting Secretary General announced that 14 non-NATO countries that had expressed interest would contribute to the IFOR.<sup>48</sup>

The Peace Agreement was formally signed on 14 December 1995. The day after the United Nations Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, adopted Resolution 1031. This resolution authorized the member's states to establish a multinational military Peace Implementation Force under a common command and composed of ground, air and maritime units of NATO and non-NATO to start Operation "Joint Endeavor" with the deployment of main forces into Bosnia.

The mission of the IFOR/SFOR was and actually still is, to monitor and if necessary, enforce compliance with the military aspects of the Dayton Agreement. The military tasks include:

- To establish self-defense and freedom of movement
- To supervise marking of the zone of separation (ZOS) and the boundaries between the parties to the conflict
- To monitor and enforce the withdrawal of forces to their territories and the establishment of the ZOS

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> *The Memory Book of the Nordic- Polish Bde* p. 7.

- To establish joint military commissions

#### **D. ORGANIZATION AND THE STRUCTURE OF IFOR/SFOR**

The Joint Operation Center of IFOR/SFOR is located in Sarajevo and is the main headquarters for all SFOR operations. It is subordinated to the NATO command Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH), which like Allied Forces central Europe (AFCENT) and Allied Forces North -West Europe (AFNORTHWEST) reports directly to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) at SHAPE. AFSOUTH is the superior command. Apart from two maritime components (COMNAVSOUTH) and COMSTRIKESOUTH) and the air component (COMAIRSOUTH), SFOR is mainly made up from the Allied Rapid Reaction Corp (ARRC) which for this operation is put under the command of AFSOUTH and provides the ground units.<sup>49</sup>

From among the divisions it commands, ARRC chose three formations designated as Multinational Division South -West (MNDSW-based on 3<sup>rd</sup> United Kingdom Division); Multinational Division North (MNDN-based on Task Force Eagle Division); and Multinational Division South-East (MNDSE-based on French Division).

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<sup>49</sup> *The Memory Book of Nordic – Polish Bde* p. 7.

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### **III. ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS OF THE NORDIC-POLISH BRIGADE**

#### **A. THE BEGINNINGS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

The Nordic-Polish Brigade (NPB) was located in the American sector of the Multinational Division North (MNDN) from December 1995. It was an element in the United States that led the Task Force Eagle TFE, which was one of the three divisions of NATO/IFOR/SFOR in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Task Force Eagle" began its history following the 1995 NATO-imposed cease-fire, halting the destructive four year Balkan conflict. After the General Framework Agreement for Peace was signed on 14 December 1995, the U.S. First Armored Division, as part of NATO's Allied Command Europe, Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), was ordered to Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of Operation Joint Endeavor.

The TFE assumed control of its area of responsibility during a transfer of authority ceremony with United Nations forces at Eagle base, Tuzla on 20 December 1995. After the historical bridging of the Sava river on 31 December 1995 the Old Ironsides Division, with supporting forces from the V U.S. Corps, was joined by the Nordic-Polish, Turkish and Russian brigades. In total, there were 12 nations: Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Poland, Denmark, Lithuania, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Russia, Turkey and United States.<sup>50</sup>

These countries formed brigades and battalions and their troops enforced the cease fire, supervised the marking of boundaries, and the zone of separation, between the

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<sup>50</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division – Bosnia Peacekeeping,  
[http://www.metronet.com/~harryb/1st\\_team/1stndx11.html](http://www.metronet.com/~harryb/1st_team/1stndx11.html).



former warring factions. They also enforced the withdrawal of the combatants to their barracks, and the movement of the heavy weapons to designated storage sites, which they subsequently monitored.

According to NATO documents "since the end of the Cold War, the number of crisis response operations has increased tremendously. It is fair to say that future security challenges lie not only in territorial defense but in the ability of the international community to respond to crisis situations. NATO has long recognized the importance of crisis management in European security, incorporating out-of-area crisis response missions into its 1991 Strategic Concept and reaffirming this commitment in the 1999 Strategic Concept."<sup>51</sup>

The start towards a creation of a Nordic-Polish Brigade goes back to February of 1991, when the UN Security Council established the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). The plan was to deploy into Croatia and secure so-called "Protected Areas. "The establishment of UNPROFOR was originally intended to be restricted to the territory of Croatia, but was gradually expanded to Macedonia and later to Bosnia.

At the meeting early in July 1993, the Nordic Ministers of Defense, (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) decided to set up a Nordic Contingent in Tuzla. This contingent, consisting of a combined Nordic Battalion with different support units, was the nucleus of the Nordic-Polish Brigade.

As the situation in Bosnia went from bad to worse during the summer of 1995, especially the fall of "Safe areas" like Srebrenica and Zepa, it led to stronger US

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<sup>51</sup> *North Atlantic Assembly Report*, <http://www.naa.be/publications/comrep/200/at>.

involvement. Planning within NATO for the Implementation Force (IFOR) was in progress. As NATO step by step released the contingency plan for IFOR, the Nordic Countries realized that the Nordic Contingent in Tuzla was too small. NATO requested a brigade structure operating within a division framework.

## **B. POLAND AS A PART OF THE BRIGADE**

Based upon this requirement, the Nordic countries started intense discussions to try to reach a common goal and to continue the Nordic co-operation. However, it soon became evident that the Nordic Countries would not be able to set up and maintain a Brigade structure alone, so the Nordic politicians started to seek the necessary support from other countries at the end of 1995.

However, to include a non- Nordic Country required some thought. In the end, Denmark became the driving force to get Poland included in the co-operation as Poland was already a participant in the Partnership for Peace program and a potential NATO member. The Poles had extensive experience in peacekeeping operations. "Poland is the one of world's 10 biggest contributors of personnel to the peacekeeping missions. Since 1953 it has taken part in 38 such missions in different regions of the world. Altogether, more than 30,000 soldiers and civilians have taken part in those efforts."<sup>52</sup> Poland responded positively, and the co-operation functioned very well from the very beginning of the creation of the Nordic-Polish Brigade.

"Poland contributed a total of 670 troops to IFOR and 500 to SFOR. Although there was not much time to prepare for the operation, the 16<sup>th</sup> Airborne Battalion – as part of a Nordic-Polish Brigade, which was subordinated to the U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division

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<sup>52</sup> Col. Waldemar Dziegielewski, *Letter to the Editor, Washington Post*, March 26 1998, p. A22.

in Tuzla, Bosnia – provided the core of Poland's contribution. To provide proper logistical support for NORDPOL, the Poles attached 24 officers (18 during SFOR) to the Nordic Support Group in Pecs, Hungary. The Poles used the 16<sup>th</sup> Airborne Battalion because it was the only unit with indigenous logistics. As a result, Poland is now restructuring its forces to bring logistics to the brigade level, and in the future to the battalion level.”<sup>53</sup>

Poland also experienced financial burdens because of the operation. “In March 1996, when costs skyrocketed to 72 million zlotys (\$26 million US) and it was unclear where the money would come from, the defense ministry cut purchases, reduced the number of recruits by 6,000, and trimmed many PfP exercises and programs. Legal changes have now been implemented so that Polish units can be sent abroad in the future.”<sup>54</sup>

The successful cooperation with Poland paved the way for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, to contribute to the Brigade. Starting on 15 December 1995, the first brigade staff conducted their very first training. The brigade commander, Danish Brigadier Finn Særmark-Thomsen and a handful of his staff were deployed by 20 December, and 10 January through 8 February, the rest of the brigade staff was deployed. There were 88 officers. US personnel also were attached to the staff.

The battalions that initially came were mechanized battalions from Denmark, Sweden and Poland, with one Engineer Battalion from Finland and one Logistics Battalion from Norway. Denmark set up the HQ-coy, Norway the Medical Support

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<sup>53</sup> Jeffrey Simon, “*The IFOR/SFOR Experience*”, <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/120.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Jeffrey Simon, “*The IFOR/SFOR Experience*”, <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/120.html>.

Company and the nations decided to work together in the Military Police Company. The working conditions for the staff were very poor. The commander and his advanced party were situated near the Swedish Battalion HQ in a small restaurant (VITA VILLAN) and with two additional containers. The rest of the staff took up positions in Teslic, at Hotel Kardial, which today is HQ for the Polish Battalion.

Most of the personnel from the Nordic countries were reservists. Finland's contribution, for example, made up of more than 90 per cent reservists. There were six times more volunteers than needed. One of the first tasks of the Finnish Construction Battalion was to repair the headquarters building. Other work now includes providing the brigade with accommodations, offices and road repair.

The Polish Battalion in particular needed assistance because it was in a new area of operations, unlike the Swedish battalion with its accommodations from the UNPROFOR days. Some elements in the Finnish Construction Battalion were used for reconnaissance and patrolling. Mine clearance was done by the former warring factions and monitored by the brigade, though it sometimes also had to clear mines in its own area of operations.

These facilities were of course not satisfactory for the staff, or for the units. Looking for better facilities was an ongoing project. Finally, the seizure of Doboj barracks solved the situation. In late January 1996, the work started to obtain the proper facilities in the VRS ( Serb Military Forces) barracks in Doboj. The barracks were in bad

condition after three years of fighting. The conditions eventually were tolerable and moving in started on 8 February.<sup>55</sup>

In the meantime, the battalions were fully occupied making life easier for themselves. The Danes who had, and still have, the greatest contingent established in the two camps of Dannevirke and Valhalla. The Swedes in Tuzla, the Poles in Teslic and Zepce, the Norwegians in Modrica and the Finns built up a totally new camp in Doboj and named it after their Commander Jussi Kilpiä.

### **C. INTERNAL PROBLEMS**

The main support element for the Brigade, the Nordic Support Group contained a multinational element and national elements for each contributing nation, was established in Pecs, Hungary. Over the years, several changes and developments have occurred. When IFOR became SFOR, in December of 1996, the Norwegians recalled the Logistics Battalion and replaced it with a Mechanized Infantry Battalion, and in June of 1998, the Finns reorganized their Engineer Battalion into a Mechanized Infantry Battalion, and obtained their own area of responsibility. From September 1998 on the former rifle platoon from Estonia (ESTPLA) and the full rifle company from the Baltic Battalion with some support units - BALTCO - is now a component of the Danish Battalion. As of 1 October 1998, Norway recalled the Medical Support Company, and the tasks were taken over by Sweden.

The Brigade Headquarters was established on 8 February in the former military barracks on the west side of Doboj and designated the North Pole Barracks. It previously

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<sup>55</sup> Artur Bilski, "*Widok na Sarajewo*", p. 31 (in my book published by Bellona Publishing House, 2000).

was located in Ljubace, together with the Swedish battalion. The whole brigade was completely deployed and operational in mid-February, when the last element, the main body of the Finish Construction Unit arrived. The brigade was renamed the Nordic-Polish Brigade (NordPol BDE) on 10 February. The previous name was the Nordic Brigade.<sup>56</sup>

The brigade staff was a special organization. Getting approximately 70 officers from 9 different nations to work together was a challenge. Gathering officers from NATO member countries, from neutral countries and from former Warsaw Pact countries and make them co-operate when there is not a common language and different procedures and regulations exist, was not designed to happen smoothly.

This is the opinion of one of the American officers: “ Although the “official” language of the brigade was English, it was important that not everyone spoke English at the same level of proficiency. Daily intelligence briefings, fragmentary orders (FRAGOs) and operation orders (OPORDs) from the brigade headquarters were not always clear and precise. It was crucial to remember that communications frustrations went both ways and that everyone labored under the burden of the communications barrier. We learned to ask about anything questionable. Although written orders and reports were, at times, worded a little unusually, the actual call-for-fire format was the same. Although we never had to fire mission, there would have been very little misunderstanding of when/how to do it if we had.” <sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Artur Bilski, “*Widok na Sarajewo*”, p. 31.

<sup>57</sup> Captain Jonathan E. Howerton commander of Howitzer Battery (M198) 3d Squadron , 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment in the Nordic-Polish Brigade deployed in Bosnia –Herzegovina, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb>.

“Language problems were also evident in Polish Battalion during the operations. An English proficiency at the 3-level proved inadequate for staff officers operating in the field; either at NORDPOL Brigade HQ at Doboj, where 21 and 38 officers served during IFOR and SFOR respectively- or at the Nordic-Support Group in Pecs, Hungary. In addition, language deficiencies appeared at the battalion level, where it was discovered that privates and/or NCO switchboard operators needed English language training.”<sup>58</sup> The Polish Ministry of Defense is now making great efforts to have all commanders possess at least a 4-level language proficiency.

The language barrier had positive and negative consequences. At this point it was also a difference in staff procedures. Looking at the positive aspects nobody could take anything for granted. It was better to slow down the pace. Having different cultural backgrounds also made the Brigade stronger since the staff could team up and look at a matter from different angles.

The NPB operational establishment was roughly 2800 soldiers plus 200 US troops working for the brigade in different staffs. The NordPol BDE had also one United States Field Artillery Battery from the 3<sup>rd</sup> US Field Artillery Regiment to provide direct support to its area of responsibility. This battery had eight 155 millimeters M109 self-propelled howitzers. There was also a U.S. Fire Support Detachment from Pennsylvania Army National Guard. All together about 220 US personnel were attached to the Nordic-Polish Bde. In June 1998, the artillery was withdrawn, due to reductions in the US contribution. At the same time, the NordPol BDE took responsibility for a larger AOR.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Jeffrey Simon, <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/forum120.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Artur Bilski, “*Widok na Sarajewo*”, p. 32.

#### D. SHARING OF INTELLIGENCE

"Intelligence requirements in Bosnia varied depending upon phase of operation but consistently required expertise in military, political, cultural, and economic issue areas. The information environment was complex and consisted of numerous, non-traditional sources. The major challenge was leveraging information from these sources which were varied as Public Affairs, Civil Affairs, Military Police, Political Advisors, UN organizations, Joint Commissions, Government Agencies, Non-Government and Private Volunteer Organizations, Joint Commissions. The databases therefore had to be flexible enough to quickly respond to requirements from the commanders as well as a wide range of other consumers."<sup>60</sup>

The Nordic – Polish Brigade had its own intelligence data collected through different sources but it also, as a part of American Task Force Eagle sector, was supposed to rely on US intelligence data. The bulk of the US intelligence system supporting IFOR/SFOR were designed for go-to-war, not peace, operations. However, not all intelligence information collected in the theatre was releasable to IFOR/SFOR. "Some recent operations, such as in Bosnia, have involved military operations with nations about which the United States still harbors lingering suspicions, such as Russia or the Ukraine. In these cases, the need to share intelligence, not only for the sake of the operation but to ensure that military partners in the operation are not put in a position where their actions or inactions prove to be dangerous to U.S. troops."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ingrid Rasmussen, "*Multinationality in Crisis response Operations*", <http://www.naa.be/publications/comrep/2000/at-103-e.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Mark M. Lowenthal, "*Intelligence, From Secrets to Policy*", p. 58.



Some of the information shared with the Russian Brigade, which was also in U.S. Division Sector, leaked to the Serbs. I remember one officer complaining that Russian officers put their military vehicle almost in front of US Division Headquarters in Tuzla to collect signals intelligence. Unfortunately, that situation influenced to some degree the Nordic-Polish Brigade, and created certain difficulties. Denmark and Norway were NATO members but not Poland, Sweden or Finland and this caused limited access to the NATO collected information.

During the mission, there were four levels of sharing intelligence information (national, IFOR/SFOR, NATO, US) and that was unacceptable. It was stated by the Task Force Eagle that it was: "one team, one mission" but when it comes to sharing intelligence information the situation was totally different. It seemed that the Brigade was acting in the same mission but as a different team. Just look at some basic facts. The brigade was not authorized to get information from the reconnaissance flights of U.S. planes due to classification. The brigade was not a prioritized unit because the NordPol was not a U.S. unit.<sup>62</sup>

It had been also frustrating to the Nordic-Polish Brigade staff that the TFE staff had used US procedures and not NATO ones in the operations and that the U.S. wanted every nation to follow their way of doing business. The great disadvantage, according to staff officers of the BDE, was that even decisions of minor importance had to be taken to a high level in the chain of command. The system was rigid and inflexible and lacked the ability to delegate authority concerning decision making down to brigade level. This

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<sup>62</sup> Nordic-Polish Brigade, *Lessons Learned*, Team 3, p. 16.

delayed staff work and caused a lot of unnecessary bureaucracy. Micro management did not work in the intelligence world in the Nordic-Polish Brigade area.

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## **IV. THE OPERATIONAL ISSUES OF THE NORDIC-POLISH BRIGADE**

### **A. THE MISSION IN THE AREA**

The peacekeeping mission of the brigade meant "an activist role (military, civilian, or both) involving diplomatic negotiations, conferences, early warning procedures, mediation, conflict resolution, and preventive diplomacy techniques to avoid or resolve a conflict or initiate a peace process."<sup>63</sup>

The Nordic-Polish Brigade organization was from the beginning focused on compliance with the mission but also focused on logistics. One of the NordPol's main tasks was to control Entity Armed Forces' (EAF) weapons and ammunition storage sites. This was carried out by frequent inspections. Most of these inspections were done on a routine basis and site commanders were warned in advance.

After one year it was obvious that the BDE forces were too small to control the vast area of responsibility (AOR). To solve these tasks, the NPB had chosen a concept of operation that took advantage of the strength of our organization to minimize the weaknesses. There was a need for more infantry and less logistics units. The area of responsibility was around 4896 square km.

This area was a mix of narrow terrain with hills and a lot of forest. This terrain was very heavily mined which created additional difficulties for the brigade soldiers. There were about 3300 recognized minefields and a large number of unknown ones. The most difficult problem was that the mine field registers are missing, if there ever existed.

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<sup>63</sup> Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, Pamela All, *"Managing Global Chaos"*, p. 321.

As a part of the IFOR/SFOR NPB the military tasks were:

- Optimize force protection
- Patrolling 156 km Zone of Separation (ZOS) and counter violations to the peace agreement
- Monitoring Entity Armed Forces' (EAF) training and movement activities
- Monitoring EAF's weapons and ammunition storage sites and confiscation of unauthorized weapons
- Enforcement of restrictions of EAF training
- Maintain freedom of movement
- Support the civil implementation of civil aspects of the peace process
- Monitor mine lifting operations

## **B. THE FORCE PROTECTION**

According to Larry Wentz "the threats in Bosnia were real. Three former warring factions, not only with significant combat power but also with robust intelligence collection capabilities, were waiting for the arrival of NATO forces and it was not clear how they might react to the IFOR deployment. The FWF also had a propaganda and misinformation campaign in operation and targeted against IFOR. Terrorist, organized crime, and petty criminals were also part of the threat. Finally, minefields were numerous and added risk to deployed personnel."<sup>64</sup>

An especially dangerous situation was in the area of the Nordic-Polish Bde. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki stated in its report that "unsubstantiated information from early May 1996 indicates, that the Bosnian Serb municipal leadership of Doboj and Teslic agreed in late April to plan possible attacks against single IFOR vehicles and foot patrols, operating off the main roads in Doboj and Teslic by unidentified elements. According to the information, the municipal leadership agreed that IFOR vehicles are to

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<sup>64</sup> Larry Wentz "Lessons From Bosnia", [http://call.army.mil/call/spc\\_prod/ccrp/lessons/bostoc.htm](http://call.army.mil/call/spc_prod/ccrp/lessons/bostoc.htm).

be destroyed by explosives and foot patrols are to be surrounded, disarmed, beaten and chased from the area.”<sup>65</sup>

Force protection was the number one priority of the IFOR/SFOR mission. This caused a different outcome within different national units, but the NPB throughout this period was on a low state of alert given the general calmness of the situation. American soldiers and units within the BDE had followed US Force Protection measures given by the Division Task Force Headquarters in Tuzla.

For example, NPB forces had been allowed to drive in one vehicle alone, going out of camps in small groups where one person was armed, drinking limited amounts of alcohol when not on duty, doing PT outside of camp and eating at local restaurants. This had been done within a US led Division where all US units had to go in 4 vehicle convoys, always under a high state of alert and dress code, and not allowed to leave the camp. This kind of “freedom” for the NPB soldiers allowed them the opportunity to become familiar with Bosnia, show their presence and also to some extent, allowed them the opportunity contact with the local population.

This also had given the battalions a chance to talk to the local population and to listen to their problems and also explain the mission of the BDE. This advantage had been successfully used by the NPB concept of operation by assisting the entities while talking to each other both on the local and official level. The mostly quiet period the BDE experienced in this very tumultuous and tense area partly resulted from the way in which the NPB was handling the situation. The entities generally trusted NPB, and supported its presence in the area.

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<sup>65</sup> Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, December 1996, Vol. 8, No. 17(D).

The Nordic-Polish Bde's perception of force protection was slightly different than the American one which was noticed by the American analysts saying: "In Tuzla, American members of SFOR could go off base only on official business, and had to do so wearing protective vests and helmets and carrying weapons. This led to morale problems as they saw military members from other countries going into town off-duty and doing so without the heavy protective equipment."<sup>66</sup>

In addition, contact with the local populace is one of the critical components of a peace operation, and American forces may need to consider changing their policies in light of the diminished threat and the overall needs of the mission. On the other hand, the American forces' presence is more inviting due to their visibility. One Air Force NCO at Tuzla Air Base referred to a national flag displayed from a Nordic-Polish Brigade vehicle as the "don't bother shooting me, I'm not an American".<sup>67</sup>

### **C. CONTROLLING THE ZONE OF SEPARATION (ZOS)**

The Nordic-Polish Bde was always highly visible in the ZOS. The brigade started with 5 permanently manned checkpoints. The job of the soldiers deployed in the checkpoints was to search for weapons in the vehicles and people crossing the Inter Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). The soldiers during their duty were confiscating many weapons. The presence of Serb police in the zone of separation was a constant problem. They had established a system to police activity that gave them control over the traffic. They were issuing visas and taking payment from non-Serbs.

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<sup>66</sup> William C. Thomas and Jeremy Cukierman, "*Trends in Peacekeeping*", <http://www.usafa.af.mil/inss/ocp25.htm>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Sometimes people from other entities were fined or arrested on very minor offenses and payment was demanded on the spot. Serb police were also threatening the people crossing the ZOS so they would not dare to come back. The goal was clear. They wanted to make the IEBL an international border. That was a problem not only related to the Serb side. The Federation police had been doing the same to a limited extent. Both parties were continuing to use many resources to patrol the ZOS by means of police and other officials dressed as civilians.

The Serb authorities were opposed to any Bosniacs and Croat movement in the Serb controlled area, and also acted to stop Serbs traveling to the Federation. "A number of Serbs in Teslic who attempted to travel to the Federation have told our researchers that they were unable to get permits because they were denied proper documents by the local police. According to IPTF (International Police Task Force) source, "Serbs have been given numerous excuses for why they can't travel; for instance-they (the police) had run out of the proper forms or that only a limited number of permits can be issued a day, etc.<sup>68</sup>

After some time, when it turned out that situation was stabilizing, the BDE decided to close down all the checkpoints except for one, which was the bridge over the Usora River. The presence on this bridge was kept because it was vital for IFOR/SFOR movements and if the bridge were blown up, freedom of movement would have been severely hampered.

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<sup>68</sup> Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, December 1996, Vol. 8, No 17(D).



After closing permanently manned checkpoints, the BDE changed its presence in the ZOS to mobile operations as used in the AOR. This transition went smoothly, and freed resources have given the NPB the chance to patrol more intensively the whole ZOS.

#### **D. HANDLING THE RETURNEES PROBLEMS**

The first challenge facing the Nordic-Polish Bde was to make the returnee issues manageable. The scale of the returnee problem in the area of responsibility was huge. "While the total number of returnees in Bosnia was often counted at 300,000 to 400,000 the Bde had focused on the returnees in the Doboj/MND (Multinational Division North). That was about 50,000 people. The G-5 section further defined the problem by narrowing it to the minority return (meaning Bosnia's return to Bosnian areas and Serbs to Serb ones) into the ZOS (zone of separation). Most of that process was left in the hands of the local municipality's authority with just a minimum involvement of the SFOR and Nordic-Polish Bde in that case."<sup>69</sup>

Consequently the BDE was able to focus on a group of minority/ZOS specific return affecting as few as "3,000 to 5,000 people resulting from International Housing Commission's (IHC) approved applications. Careful definition of the returnee challenge was the vital step in the effective management of the problem as a whole. The BDE had to create a secure and safe environment in which there was no violence, and in which returns can go orderly and peacefully."<sup>70</sup>

To deal with the return problem, the ZOS Office of High Representative (OHR) established the IHC consisting of 4 member organizations namely the International Police

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<sup>69</sup> Nordic-Polish Brigade, *Lessons Learned*, Team 3, p. 34.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

Task Force (IPTF), OHR, SFOR and United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The IHC was activated in October 1996 in order to speed up the return process, which was stalled at that time. Another purpose of the IHC was to fulfill the intentions of Annex 7, Article II to GFAP: "The Parties shall provide all possible assistance to refugees and displaced persons and work to facilitate their voluntary return in a peaceful, orderly and phased manner, in accordance with the UNHCR repatriation plan."

While the Dayton Accords theoretically guarantee the right of people to return to their former homes, reality has proven to be far different. While the Bosniaks have proven generally speaking to be cooperative in carrying out the returning process, the Serbs have bitterly opposed any resettlement. When the process started local leaders organized "spontaneous protest " of local people. Actually it was not difficult because the hatred between Bosnian Serbs and Muslims and Croats was so deep that it was quite easy to call people and arrange a riot. The most dangerous situation happened when explosives were detonated in the houses, which were supposed to be resettled by Muslims or Croats in the zone of separation.<sup>71</sup>

Unfortunately Bosniacs themselves also made that process difficult and inefficient. They should be blamed to some degree because they had chosen the area that had strategic importance and priority in the Nordic - Polish area of responsibility such as the Doboj neighborhood. "Whole process of resettlement was orchestrating by Bosnians leaders. It happened once that they sent a group of "resettles" which turned out to be the

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<sup>71</sup> Artur Bilski," *Widok na Sarajevo* " p. 55.

soldiers, pretending to be resettles. Some people were simply paid to go to the areas of prime strategic importance for Bosnian authorities.”<sup>72</sup>

“The Muslims strategy was to resettle people into these areas and after that take the rule over Doboj and the whole Ozren area. Doboj was part of a Muslim strategy to gradually cut up small pieces of the Republika Srbska territory without fighting. However, since the main areas of resettlement were of critical importance for Serbs, they used all available measures to campaign against Muslim resettlement. Several houses were blown up in the areas were Muslims planned to return. The Serbs were unable to find the perpetrators. Radio and newspapers were trying to convince Muslims that when they return, no one would be able to protect them and this could be dangerous for their life.”<sup>73</sup>

Such a situation undermined the resettlement process. This kind of situation of “forced resettlement “required a high degree of flexibility and creative thinking from the Brigade staff. In order to deal proactively with this issue, the Brigade staff together with International Organizations (IOs), developed the Minority Return Plan (MRP), which provided the parties a minimum of procedures and other measures to facilitate a peaceful and orderly return. The plan also pointed out the responsibility between the local authorities and IOs. This provided a good foundation to bring the interested parties to the Brigade Headquarters for the first time since the war started so the former enemies were at least able to discuss resettlement issues.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>73</sup> Artur Bilski” *Widok na Sarajevo* “, p. 55.

Despite BDE intelligence cell predictions of large-scale returns in 1997, it gradually became clear that the political/strategic climate was not yet conducive to this type of activity. Faced with this reality, the BDE clarified its position with regard to returns in the area of responsibility (AOR). The BDE internal plan for resettlement stated: Questions surrounding the likelihood of returns in the NORDPOL AOR were irrelevant to the BDE. The BDE was only concerned that, if returns should occur, that they be coordinated (phased) peaceful and orderly.

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## **V. CIVIL – MILITARY COOPERATION OF THE BDE**

### **A. CHALLENGES AND DEMANDS OF CIMIC**

According to Nordic-Polish Bde G-5 section “the need of some kind of civil-military cooperation was recognized a long time ago. Indeed, the Americans formed “civil affairs” units as early as 1942. The Scandinavian countries have included humanitarian tasks in their UN peacekeeping operations throughout the world from the very beginning in the late 1950s. The ambitions and the readiness of the international community to tackle problematic multidimensional conflicts have increased in the 1990s. The lessons learned show rather clearly, that the mere traditional use of military assets is not sufficient.”<sup>74</sup>

Civil – military activities prior to the mission in Bosnia were very narrowly conceived by NATO and were generally regarded as “rear area” activities associated with host-nation logistic support and alleviating refugee interference with military operations.

The main goal and essence of the IFOR/SFOR mission was to maintain a safe and secure environment so that reconciliation could take place. Since mission accomplishment depended upon effective civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), such cooperation and the CIMIC organizational element, in particular, became a vital “front line” asset. “In peacekeeping missions, there is no clear distinction between peace and war. As a result, interaction and communication between a mission’s civilian and military components must be continuous.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> “G-5- Closer to the people”, <http://www.nordpol.net/nordpolhq/g5.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> Michael C. Williams, “Civil-Military Relations and Peacekeeping”, p. 68.

“Civil – military Co-operation (CIMIC) has thus become an important component in a peacekeeping operation. It can help a commander to deal with local authorities (including local “spoilers” in the peace process) , it can help a commander work with international civilian resources essential to overall mission success, and it can assist in supporting and preserving military assets by freeing soldiers from non- military responsibilities.”<sup>76</sup>

In Bosnia, the military part of the GFAP has been implemented in the area of brigade responsibility. The separation of warring forces and the implementation of the military aspects of the Peace Agreement were one of the vital goals of the IFOR mission. In December 1996, the IFOR changed to the SFOR. The IFOR mission had already been accomplished as there were no military fights among warring factions, and the new SFOR started. The priority of the SFOR was to sustain what already had been accomplished in putting into action the GFAP civil aspects. As attention to military matters of the region lessened, the implementation of the various civil aspects of the Peace Agreement became a priority.

The consequences were that the responsibility of officers working in the area of the G-5 section became more important and vital when it comes to good relations with local leaders. However, such a situation required from the staff officers working on CIMIC matters considerable experience with the civilian area for which they were not trained. “Civil-military co-operation has come long way, but it is by no means wrinkle-

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<sup>76</sup> Sean Pollick, “*Civil-Military Cooperation: A New Tool for Peacekeepers*”, [http://www.journal.dnd.ca/vol11/no3\\_e/peace1\\_e.html](http://www.journal.dnd.ca/vol11/no3_e/peace1_e.html).

free. CIMIC still needs to be made more comprehensive. There is also still some distrust and misgivings to be overcome on the part of both NGOs and the military”<sup>77</sup>

“Officers who had only experience in dealing with soldiers and military life had difficulties to handle matters with the local authorities that was leading to misunderstandings in the area of both local and international organization. Since civilians did not respond to orders and were often representing anti-military attitude the staff officers of civil-military cells both in the Brigade and battalion level required some additional training.”<sup>78</sup>

The responsibility of the G-5 (CIMIC – Civil - Military Cooperation) section was very diverse and had tremendous importance to the successful completion of this peace-supporting mission. The level of interaction between the brigade and the local population and its leaders was much higher and more intensive than in the wartime scenario. Actions taken by the G-5 cell were covering different areas specified as follows<sup>79</sup>:

- Returnee questions, minority and majority problems in respective “hot spots”
- Elections
- Cooperation with the International Community
- Cooperation with local authorities and social patrolling
- Humanitarian projects as a part of force protection

#### **B. ELECTION**

The election was a very important part of the Dayton Accord and was supposed to create new Bosnian leaders who would be able to lead the country to a democratic future

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<sup>77</sup> Jennifer N. Ross, [http://www.cfp-pec.gc.ca/Other Annual Events/Jennifer\\_Ross.htm](http://www.cfp-pec.gc.ca/Other%20Annual%20Events/Jennifer_Ross.htm).

<sup>78</sup> Nordic-Polish Brigade, *Lessons Learned*, Team 3, p. 36.

<sup>79</sup> Nordic-Polish Brigade, *Lessons Learned*, Team 3, p. 33.



with the assistance and help of the international community. NordPol, supported the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) efforts to administer the country's first ever democratic national elections. Through careful planning and the execution of every mission, the soldiers of the multi-national allies had continued to monitor the militaries of the former combatants and provide a climate of stability in the war-torn land of Bosnia.

The local authorities via Local Elections Committees were responsible for conducting the elections. The international community designated OSCE to supervise the election to be carried out orderly in accordance with democratic regulations. The IFOR/SFOR was in turn responsible for creating a secure environment so the election could take place at all. That meant wide cooperation of military officers with the local and international community in order to coordinate various types of military activity. The NPB appointed liaison officers to the OSCE in Banja Luka and the Tuzla Regional Center as well as to the Prnjavor, Doboj, Tuzla, Srebrenik and Zenica Field Offices.

The liaison officer of the NPB contacted the OSCE offices at least once a week or more often if needed. The units of the NPB supported the OSCE by filling out Voter Registration Center (VRC) and Polling Station (PS), and especially checking the exact grid references of different locations. The Nordic-Polish Brigade was responsible for securing voting stations and free access to roads for all minorities.

"OSCE had to rely heavily on the IFOR/SFOR otherwise it would not be able to fulfill its tasks."<sup>80</sup> While working with the representatives of the OSCE, some problems emerged because only a few of OSCE personnel had any military background and they

had good basic knowledge of their job and the circumstances.” The others were rather inexperienced with no military training. So there was not much understanding among them of military jargon and abbreviation and the civilians were embarrassed and shy to ask for explanation. Such a situation required using a “common language”.<sup>81</sup>

Misunderstanding caused a lot of problems. The most important matters were agreed upon in writing. The meaning of the key words was defined in the documents. The people representing the international community working in the AOR of the NPB were civilians. Due to the diffuse nature of the NGO community, the military often was confused when trying to figure out who is in charge, what organizational structure is present in-country, or how the civilian chain-of-command, if one exists, functions.

What had been noticed was that the NGO ‘s people were very motivated but not often mission-oriented. Consequently, while the military person sees an objective and plan carefully, the civilians in the IOs were suffering from a lack of central coordination between the international organizations working in the area.

Part of effective communications between the military and NGO community is ensuring that each understands what the other is saying. Communicating and sharing information with the NGOs/IOs was a new experience for the multinational Bde and NATO itself. The humanitarian relief organizations bring with them cultural and language differences that need to be understood and dealt with by the military in order to avoid misunderstandings, unnecessary competition, and mistrust. Unfortunately, the

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<sup>80</sup> Praca Zbiorowa, *Wybrane Zagadnienia Dotyczące Misji IFOR w Bosni-Hercegowinie*

<sup>81</sup> Nordic-Polish Brigade, *Lessons Learned*, Team 3, p. 37.

need for cooperation between IOs and military was not fully appreciated by the military at the outset. Also many civilian agencies such as the OHR were consumed with problems in setting up their own organizations and cooperation with the IFOR/SFOR was not their main concern.

### **C. SOCIAL PATROLLING AND CONTACTS WITH THE LOCAL POPULATION**

A critical part of the Civil-Military Cooperation cell of the NPB involved activities contributing to force protection for the brigade. The strategy was to keep up good communications and relations with local leaders and local populations. In order to do that the Bde initiated the program of "social patrols" as well as hosting numerous meetings between local officials from both parties. "Social patrolling" involved visiting "hot spots" areas such as potential resettlement sites and points of special interest to monitor the situation and obtain the opinions, viewpoints, and other information from local residents. "This kind of Bde activity often provided the commanding officer with crucial data regarding such sensitive issues like potential tensions in the area, areas designated for resettlement, gravesites visits and other possible problems."<sup>82</sup>

To improve communication with the civilian leaders of the local entities the Nordic-Polish Bde hosted numerous meetings, many of which included representatives from both sides. These meetings although sometimes difficult and hard improved significantly the degree of communication and understanding between the entities. These meetings also resulted in the peaceful resolution of several potentially dangerous situations without incident. Additionally, direct liaison and communication with local

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<sup>82</sup> Nordic-Polish Bde, *Lessons Learned*, Team 3, p. 38.

officials on both sides was instrumental in the excellent working relationship between NPB and the entities.<sup>83</sup>

#### **D. HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS**

On a very personal level, members of the NORDPOLBDE have been making practical contributions to restoring civic order since the operation started, and in some cases, even before the arrival of the IFOR. The Swedish Battalion has spent the last four years assisting in the Tuzla region, providing equipment to schools and hospitals, and offering food to displaced persons. In Doboij, home of the Brigade Headquarters, the Danish Battalion donated fresh potatoes and worked on schools. The Finnish Construction Battalion had a crew of 400 plumbers, electricians, and carpenters, skilled in vertical and horizontal tasking and made their services available. In fact, all the countries represented under the Brigade corporate logo have shed the soldier suits to help the local population. As often is the case, though, money remains a real obstacle to proffering humanitarian aid.<sup>84</sup>

Later, the situation had changed. "The Infrastructure and Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Projects" had started. "To foster the reconstruction process, the EC is assisting in small scale, quickly implemented projects at a local level. It helps to encourage cooperation and trust and has immediately visible results and benefits for the local population. Consequently, the EC also fosters the implementation of its small-scale operations programme and SFOR micro projects."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>84</sup> Scott A. Fleming, "Nordic- Polish Brigade Excelling in Civil Contributions", "The Talon", July 19, 1996.

<sup>85</sup> "The ECSFOR Micro Projects and Small Scale Operations Programmes", <http://www.seerecon.org/Bosnia/Bosnia-DonorPrograms/Bosnia-Donors-EC/Sectors/Mic.../1.htm>.

“The Infrastructure and Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Projects” were intended to be used as a means to improve or increase Brigade and IFOR/SFOR force protection by showing the local population that the military forces also support the local population’s transition to peace and normality. The NORDPOLBDE participated in so called Community Infrastructure and Reconstruction Projects (CIRP) Phase I was administrated and directed by the U.S. Division Task Force Eagle.

For example, in the period from January to June 1996, the NPB submitted 56 projects of which eight were approved, but only four were actually activated and executed. The last four were never implemented put into life due to the lack of funding. Unfortunately it become soon evident that the projects within the NordPol area of responsibility were not a priority so the CIRP Phase I was finally terminated on 31 December 1996.<sup>86</sup>

The consequence of such a situation was the high expectations of the local communities, which were never fulfilled. Mistrust resulted when no projects were approved and no money for the municipality arrived. Also, the approval process created some confusion. For instance, the Task Force Eagle approved projects on level one which is the Division level and informed the NPB which again informed municipal authorities. However, the approvals at the TFE level only meant the projects were eligible for submission to the USAID in Sarajevo for final approval. Projects had in general a maximum funding limit per project or USAID CIRP – \$50,000.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Nordic-Polish Brigade, *Lessons Learned*, Team 3, p. 38.

<sup>87</sup> Nordic-Polish Brigade, *Lessons Learned*, Team 3, p. 39.

The final result was that the local authorities were told their project applications were approved at level one which raised their expectations, but in the end none of the projects were funded. So, a dangerous situation was created when the credibility of civil-military relations between the Brigade and local communities was undermined. The press and information sections were often asked during the press conferences why particular projects were not carried out or what other projects the NPB was going to implement.

It created misunderstanding and mistrust when the projects already accepted were never executed. The politics of the "stick and carrot" was unsuccessful to some degree and had some impact on BDE credibility. Due to these experiences, the NPB was not so willing to develop further cooperation in this area with the Task Force Eagle Division based in Tuzla.

Looking to improve the situation, the NPB found out that the European Union was financing projects within the MNDs composed of military forces from member states. Among the Nordic-Polish Brigade there were three member states of the EU: Denmark, Sweden and Finland. G-5 sections rewrote all the projects which were rejected by the USAID and submitted them to the European Commission through SFOR HQ in Sarajevo. 62 projects were approved and each project was worth approximately 40.000 DEM.<sup>88</sup> NPB communicated also with different nations Foreign Ministries through the Defense Ministries applying for funds to specially targeted resettlement areas related to the "Minority Return Plan."

The military part of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) or as it is also called the "Dayton Peace Agreement" had been implemented in the Nordic-

Polish Bde area of responsibility with full cooperation with all party's forces. The NPB had created a peaceful and secure environment for the civilian part to be implemented, however, they regretfully lagged behind. There were different reasons for this but the most important seems to be the donor countries 's use of concessions. They were often attaching strings to the aid offered which led to unequal support provided to the Federation and the Serb's Republic. Unfortunately, the Nordic-Polish Brigade did not have any control over this situation.

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<sup>88</sup> Nordic-Polish Bde, *Lessons Learned*, Team 3, p. 39.

## VI. PRESS AND INFORMATION SECTION

### A. MEDIA AS A PLAYER

Major General William L. Nash, the NATO commander in the American-controlled sector of Bosnia in 1996, following his retirement from the army, said to a journalist, "The art of good reporting is to seduce the subject. The art of the military commander is to seduce the reporter."<sup>89</sup> Such a role was mostly played by the PIO's officers.

In today's high technology environment, information is a very important factor, which may decide the success or failure of a military operation. The "CNN effect"(unsubstantiated media reports), coupled with the "information revolution", created formidable challenges for the military. In Bosnia, there was a media presence throughout the country when IFOR arrived. The information networks serving the media, the IFOR, and its coalition member nations provided the ability to share information at a speed and efficiency never before experienced.<sup>90</sup>

In some areas, especially those controlled by the Serbs, the IFOR was a target in a propaganda campaign, and a misinformation campaign was in full operation when the first international troops arrived on the scene. The problem then was how to change the situation in order to diminish the anti IFOR/SFOR propaganda.

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<sup>89</sup> Charles C. Moskos, *The Media and the Military in Peace and Humanitarian Operations*, p. 27.

<sup>90</sup> Larry K. Wentz "Lessons from Bosnia" [http://call.army.mil/call/spc\\_prod/ccrp/lessons/bostoc.htm](http://call.army.mil/call/spc_prod/ccrp/lessons/bostoc.htm).



The main task of the Press and Information section in the Nordic-Polish Brigade was to give a correct picture of the NPB within the AOR. To increase the interest of home countries, a homepage was created and published on the Internet.

The mission of the P&I Section was to<sup>91</sup>:

- Generate public understanding and support for the SFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Advise to the Commanding Officer in P&I matters
- Inform the public on the peace stabilization process

#### **B. DEALING WITH THE LOCAL MEDIA**

For most of the local journalist, the section they were dealing with had been involved in propaganda activity during the war and they were very much dependent on their political sponsors. Thus there were no chance for objectivity in the media since it was strictly supervised by the political leaders of Mr. Radovan Kardzic's party SDS (Serb Democratic Part). Additionally the unemployment in the Republika Srbska was almost 90 per cent and the working journalist compared to the rest of the people were, at least, paid for their job. However, at the same time, they were tools in the hands of political parties owing the media.

There were many cases of journalists on both sides being threatened. In most cases, this was successful and journalists became a tool in the politicians hands. However, it was not easy and actually it is still not easy to be an independent journalist in Bosnia – Herzegovina. I remember one case of Azemina Muhamedovic. She was a journalist for the "Oslobodjenje" newspaper and worked in Tesanij. Before that she was a head of the local radio station in that Muslim city. She was dismissed from that job by

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<sup>91</sup> Nordic-Polish Bde, *Lessons Learned*, P&I Section Supplement.

the influential Minister of Interior Affairs of the Doboj - Zenica canton Semsudin Mehmedovic.

Asemina Muhamedovic stated latter to me that "he insisted on me to publish the information which was convenient for the ruling party. I did not want to and I was forced to leave. Afterwards my husband was beaten up by unknown people. I have no doubt. That was the warning directed to me. Semsudin Mehmedovic wanted to subordinate the press in order to have control over the black market in the area. "92

The same situation or even worse occurred in the Srbska Republic. However, there, those who did not want to follow the official party line and published independent articles or tried to be objective were harassed in many ways. Their cars or homes were blown up or unknown people were throwing bombs into the newspaper's office.

The Press and Information Section weekly was handling one joint press conference, which all journalists were attending. The problem was that some of the journalists were twisting the information given by the spokesman of the Brigade in the way that propaganda goals were established before. The press conferences for Serb journalists were held downtown in Doboj in the former Federal Yugoslav Army's building. The atmosphere of the press conference was very stressful especially during the first phase of the IFOR mission.

### **C. PROPAGANDA WAR**

However, the most important information to deal with was the external information for local media to increase the force protection. Local Serb media was hostile toward the Brigade. The journalists were simply forced to lie but most of them did it on

purpose because they had to believe the ideology they were disseminating. Especially hostile was the local Radio Doboj run by editor in chief Milenko Gligoric who had no professional experience as a journalist. Mr. Milenko Gligoric was the ultra – nationalist and hard-line vice president of the SDS (Serb Democratic Party) in Doboj and as mentioned previously, head of the only radio station in the area, Radio Doboj. Gligoric was “uncompromising in his views that ethnic co-existence between Serbs and non-Serbs is not possible and completely unacceptable.”

During and after the war, Gligoric gave speeches on Radio Doboj in which he encouraged the Bosnian Serbs to expel all Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats from Doboj. In 1993 Gligoric began a campaign informing all non-Serbs in Doboj that they should convert to Orthodox Christianity and personally drove around the area with a mounted loudspeaker propagating his policy. He was especially influential in the historically nationalist Ozren region south of Doboj.<sup>93</sup>

Radio Doboj was a state owned enterprise totally controlled by the SDS. The SDS party was led by the war criminal Radovan Kardzić who was wanted by the UN. The range of the radio was quite large so it might been listened to at least several kilometers from the city of Doboj. The advantage of having this radio station in SDS hands was obvious to all. To give an example of Radio Doboj “news” I quote two examples. One comes from 11 August 1997 the head of Radio Doboj states:

The fourth anniversary of the day when Doboj was defended in the Pridjel area was celebrated in the village of Pridjel yesterday. Paying the post

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<sup>92</sup> Artur Bilski “Widok na Sarajewo”,p. 68.

<sup>93</sup> Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, December 1996. Vol. 8, No.17 (D).

mortal respect to the 21 villagers who got killed in the battle, Radenko Maric, Commander of the Pridjel Unit said that during the Operation "Jump", the enemy, coming from Tesanj, had tried to cut off Ozren and surround the Doboj town. Some parts of the Pridjel were surrounded by the enemy. "We had some of our soldiers killed, but we did not abandoned the position," Maric said. Milenko Gligoric, president of the Pridjel Local Community (Managing Director of Radio Doboj), said on the occasion: "In this war, we lost 20 men and one woman, our sister Cvijeta. We must always remember their sacrifices. We have to stay united. The war against the Serb nation is still going on, now, in peace. With our interior traitors' assistance, our enemy is trying to cheat us. This war in peace is more dangerous than the previous one when we fought with weapons in our hands. Let us save our unity, let us vote for RS. You know quite well who is trying to save this first Serb state. If they, that scum of this world, who act as the International Community, manage to cheat us now, if they get us on our knees now, then the two centuries of our righteous fight for freedom will be annihilated.<sup>94</sup>

The other information is from 10 July 1997 and was broadcast on Radio Doboj every hour during the news the same day when British special forces SAS carried out a special operation to arrest suspected war criminals. During the action one was successfully arrested and the other was killed. The Radio also send a letter to the Commander of the Nordic-Polish Bde titled:

On the occasion of Simo Drljaca's murder, and arrest of several citizens of Serb nationality in Prijedor and other areas of Republic of Srbska: "We are shocked with the news that the international terrorists on Thursday forenoon, savagely liquidated the legend of Prijedor area and Serb hero Simo Drljaca, arrested his closest relatives and taken them away to unknown direction. Is that a democracy, which you propagate through CNN, BBC, DW, RFE, etc? Is that the Dayton Agreement in which the World represented through international organizations is swearing in? Does the "International forces for peace stabilization", shortly "SFOR", "stabilize" the peace by killing innocent people, who are fishing on the riverside by which they grew up? No, it is not democracy. That is fascism worse than Mussolini's and Hitler's one. Serb Radio-Doboj widely opened its radio waves to, now already so-called "Force for peace stabilization". Even when it had a reason to criticize, very often it had not done that, due to thinking that in that way it will benefit to better understanding between

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<sup>94</sup> Radio Doboj News 08.11.97.

Serbs and the World. But that, obviously and after all, was in vain. Because of this, the Staff of Serb Radio-Doboj decided to cancel its hospitality to SFOR members on its radio waves, and to remove the "Most" broadcast from its program. The bridges are destroyed, not by our fault, and will they be restored again, who knows. One way or another, they will never be as passable as they were until now.<sup>95</sup>

The local newspapers in the area like "Svitanija", "Glas Srbski" followed the Radio Doboj's propaganda path. The Nordic-Polish Brigade were doing many routine searches in the ZOS just to find the weapons which were not allowed in the ZOS and to prevent any fights with resettles. I took part in many of them so I know that the troops behaved as professionally as was possible but never as described in the newspaper.

In the article titled "A "raid" with no precedent" <sup>96</sup>, an author with the initials B. T. writes:

These days, the SFOR has started a large "weapon search" action in the Socanica, Derventa area. Without any prior announcements, they have been breaking suddenly into people's houses, fumbling the things in hope to find "a piece or two of weapon." The locals in Socanica say that SFOR soldiers, armed fully and with their guns pointing, are breaking into their houses, into bedrooms, bathrooms, all rooms, into stables, pig pens and chicken coops even. Not used to the "raids", the children, scared and in tears, are rushing to find a shelter in their parents and adult arms. To add to this, a seventy year old women says: "We have been through many humiliations. We will endure this one too, but God punish who let them do this to us.

Typical propaganda and lack of professionalism: no names of the people he talked to, no names of the author. I am quite sure that an author of this story did not talk to any people at the spot. He was not even there.

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<sup>95</sup> "Letter to the Nordic-Polish Brigade and Public Media in Doboj and Republic of Srbska", Radio Doboj, July 10, 1997.

<sup>96</sup> B.T. "Svitanija", Doboj, December 2, 1998.

Another example comes from "Nezavisne Novine". The article was published on 8 December and its title is: "Chemical weapon in BiH – the fact hushed down". Newspaper is accusing NATO of using in 1995 the uranium bombs during the bombardment of Serb positions.

When NATO started bombing Yugoslavia in March 1999 the Republika Srpska newspapers widely quoted Serb leaders. Here are some examples. Voislav Seselj was quoted saying:

Yugoslavia is attacked by the biggest possible crowd of world criminals and thugs that history ever knew. The Serb nation will remain united and determined to defend the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia and Yugoslavia.<sup>97</sup>

There are many more examples of this kind simply trying to pull the emotional strings of the people without giving them professional and objective information. One last example of Serb propaganda against NATO follows. This time even poetry had been used in the propaganda struggle. Of course, the author remained nameless.

A poem against NATO <sup>98</sup>

A full moon is rising, red with blood

Above Belgrade, where it lingers-full of fear,

In pain, in spasm.

A full moon is coming, crying in the wind-

Yugoslavia-is mourned,

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<sup>97</sup> The nameless author "Blic", Belgrade, 03/26/1999.

<sup>98</sup> "Vecenje Novosti", Belgrade, 04/14/99.

Yugoslavia is deep in grief, in a veins piercing grief.

Washington-is celebrating the bloodshed.

They are feeding their bellies with blood,

Men of stone hearts,

Experts in killing.

In a most cruel way are the Yankees

and their servants

making their own universe of power.

What right does he speak of,

From whom is this Cesar

That speaks only with weapon

Defending us?

Propaganda is a feeble foundation of society. Everybody knows this who lived under the communist regimes. However, propaganda is still a useful tool to control the people's minds. Serb propaganda is mostly based on lies.

To show the state of mind of the people in the Balkans, it is worth quoting the definition of a lie described by Father Jozef Tishner in his article about Stalinism:

A political lie is an amazing structure, he says; the deeper we get into it, the more fascinated we become. It is a beautiful building, full of nooks, with extensive corridors, stairs and ladders, surrounded by wild shrubbery and manicured alleys.

You need profound knowledge to find your way in this world. Not everybody is allowed to say every lie. There are privilege lies reserved for the privileged and common

lies for the commoners. There are lies about past and future. There are also lies about the present. These may be especially worth examining, since they deny what everybody can see.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Elzbieta Pawelek, “*Far from the truth*”, *Warsaw Voice*, April 4, 1999.



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## VII. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The final chapter of the Nordic – Polish Brigade was closed in January 2000 when a significant number of personnel was pulled out and the brigade was renamed the Nordic- Polish Battle Group composed of Danish and Polish battalions with small Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian detachments. All together 800 soldiers are still serving in the Bosnia fulfilling peacekeeping mission.<sup>100</sup>

Looking back into the history of this very special Brigade it has, over the years, been able to fulfill its tasks, and has reached results from its work far beyond what could be expected from a mixture like the Nordic-Polish Brigade. The disadvantages with a multinational unit have been turned into advantages and performed in the true spirit of the Nordic-Polish Brigade motto: one mission-one team.

In the beginning there naturally were some problems and misunderstandings concerning the overall concept and NATO staff procedures. I remember an opinion of staff officer of Nordic-Polish Brigade Maj. Jan Boczkowski. He stated that the culture of the Warsaw Pact inculcated, “simply asking questions is seen as a lack of competence. So you ‘d rather make a mistake than ask a question.”

There were differences among the leading nations: “Dig a little deeper, though the cultural divide grows much more apparent. Former Warsaw Pact officers serving in SFOR are stunned at the amount of paper and briefing work NATO generates. “The American’s addiction to churning out computer-generated briefings slides with Microsoft

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<sup>100</sup> Polish Press Agency: <http://nato.pap.com.pl/chi/wiad.plx?ID=9765>

“PowerPoint” software is especially bewildering. While you are making your PowerPoint slides we would be killing you,” one unimpressed Russian officer scoffed to a NATO colleague as they mused about who would win a conventional war. NATO officers, for their part, find themselves frustrated by the difficulty the Poles and other former Warsaw Pact countries have in grasping the concept of initiative and creativity at the unit level”<sup>101</sup>.

That was one extreme opinion. However, I think it is worth quoting another one from the same article, which is totally opposite of that quoted above. “Western commanders praise the work shown by Warsaw Pact troops in the field. The Poles, for example, have served in peacekeeping operations from Haiti to Cambodia, and when the task is straightforward says a U.S. major in Bosnia, “they are incredibly motivated, and they don’t jack around with doing stuff. They just do it. I’d rather have Poles than any of the (Western) Europeans.”<sup>102</sup>

Some of the nations were non-NATO nations and were in the process of adapting its staff procedures. During the existence of the Brigade there was remarkable change in this aspect. Staff people experienced that when were dealing with new operations. Their cooperation with national battalions had improved significantly. The cooperation with the battalions was special in the aspect that the normal NATO-way is for the Brigade to order a battalion to act according to a given order, sometimes without any warning.

The staff came to a conclusion that this was not the way the international unit should work. The Brigade was using another sometimes time consuming concept. The

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<sup>101</sup> Tom Zimmerman , “*They are still Poles apart*”, *U.S. News World Report*, 03/24/97.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

BDE let the BNs participate in the planning process. Another way of getting good interoperability was the BDE training plan. Among other problems in the BDE, there was language. The weak point of a multinational unit was the language. As I mentioned before there were 9 different cultural and language backgrounds. This naturally caused some problems.

Although in the beginning of NATO mission in Bosnia, civil-military relations in the Nordic-Polish Brigade were not perceived as vital for the whole mission but it soon become clear, when the military part of Dayton Agreement had been accomplished, that those must become a priority. The G-5 section was being built up in order to face new challenges.

Understanding and appreciation of the civil-military affairs came later. "Widespread civil-military coordination and cooperation did not really occur until the May 1996 time frame. The quote Admiral Leighton Smith, COMFOR, "In November we never heard of CIMIC. We had no idea what you did. Now we can't live without you".<sup>103</sup>

The problem was to get experienced people so they can handle the problems of a civilian nature. Actually, there were not so many officers able to handle it so as to solve the problems instead of creating new ones. Many of them lacked basic knowledge on civil-military relations so they had to learn it while the civil-military cooperation was going on which slowed it down and created misunderstandings. The other side of the story is that to fulfill fully civil-military cooperation in the NPB area of responsibility, the BDE required also strong participation of the International Organizations.

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<sup>103</sup> Larry K. Wentz "*Lessons from Bosnia*" [http://call.army.mil/call/spc\\_prod/ccrp/lessons/bostoc.htm](http://call.army.mil/call/spc_prod/ccrp/lessons/bostoc.htm).

“There was no understanding by commanders and staff at all levels of IFOR/SFOR of the capabilities, roles, and mission of Civil Affairs units and personnel, referred to as Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC). As a result, the military support to the humanitarian aspects of the operation was more reactive than proactive, especially during the early stages of the operation.”<sup>104</sup>

The Danish lessons learned from Nordic- Polish Brigade unit are as follows<sup>105</sup>:

- Importance of pre-mission preparation
- Importance of familiarity with doctrine and procedures used in the mission
- Multinational integration at battalion level and below can work well in a permissive environment provided that necessary input is made and other pre-conditions are met
- The effectiveness generally increases in accordance with national homogeneity. Within the permissive environment of SFOR, it was seen that organic units of company size or above with their own national commander are most effective
- A hostile environment places the highest priority on faultless command and control and produces the greatest challenge for low - level multinational formations
- Commanders need to accept responsibility and to exercise initiative. Providing integrated units with their own area of responsibility worked well. Units must be stable under stress and able to make decisions.
- Co-operation, tact, reliability and determination are essential attributes in a multinational environment
- Integration of staff officers in operational positions is of advantage to all nations. Placing officers and NCOs in administrative positions and integration of individual soldiers is less cost-effective
- Overlapping host and partner deployments provides continuity, but the opportunity for pre-mission training in the higher level formation is lost
- The formation of liaison and advisory team from the host unit helps facilitate successful integration. Effort is required from all levels
- Appropriate English-language skills are needed at all levels

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> *The North Atlantic Assembly Report*, <http://www.naa.be/publications/comrep/200/at>.

- Continuous and feedback enable implementation of lessons learned

“Increasingly, crisis response operations bring together more and more countries, working together. Multinationality is often considered both a military and a political necessity – militarily because resources can be combined and specialized skills utilized, and politically because it gives greater legitimacy to the operation. In addition, nations working together can learn from each other both on the professional as well as on the cultural level.”<sup>106</sup>

There are, of course, problems when many nations working together. Thus, for multinationality to be workable and to be able to create optimum solutions, a certain or even high degree of community spirit is necessary. First and foremost there must be shared ideas, interests and values at the political level. Furthermore, states must constrain their behavior with a view to reaching common solutions rather than pursuing narrow national interests. In general terms, each state must be able to realize advantages derived from international co-operation that are perceived to be greater than if the state did not take part. “<sup>107</sup>

The Nordic –Polish Brigade is a good example how this cooperation was planned and executed. The challenges it faced might be a good lesson learned for future such joint missions. This example of multinational cooperation, which proved its importance has been now followed by the other common military enterprises like, the recently created, South Eastern European Brigade located in Bulgaria composed of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Turkey.

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<sup>106</sup> *The North Atlantic Assembly Report*, <http://naa.be/publications/comrep/200/at>.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

Overall it was a positive development working in an international environment since it gave the individuals inputs from the others and took away from stereotypical thinking. Especially the latter is very important to a multinational Brigade.

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